

Memorandum

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management

From: Secretary

Re: Wilderness Policy

Congressionally approved wilderness areas are an important part of the conservation assets of the United States. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) currently manages 221 wilderness areas and 545 wilderness study areas designated by Congress, which comprise approximately 8.8 percent of the nearly 245 million acres managed by the BLM.

There is longstanding support for the designation of wilderness areas. A number of proposed wilderness designations are pending before the 112th Congress, and other areas are being actively considered for additions to the wilderness system. Wilderness areas provide a number of benefits, including unique hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities.

The BLM maintains an inventory of all lands under its jurisdiction, pursuant to Section 201 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). As these inventories confirm, the BLM manages large landscapes that have wilderness characteristics.

On December 22, 2010, I issued Secretarial Order 3310 to address the BLM's management of wilderness resources on lands under its jurisdiction. Under Secretarial Order 3310, I ordered the BLM to use the public resource management planning process to designate certain lands with wilderness characteristics as "Wild Lands."

On April 14, 2011, the United States Congress passed the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Pub. L. 112-10)(2011 CR), which includes a provision (Section 1769) that prohibits the use of appropriated funds to implement, administer, or enforce Secretarial Order 3310 in Fiscal Year 2011.

I am confirming today that, pursuant to the 2011 CR, the BLM will not designate any lands as "Wild Lands."

As required by law, the BLM will continue to maintain inventories of lands under its jurisdiction, including lands with wilderness characteristics. Also, consistent with FLPMA and other applicable authorities, the BLM will consider the wilderness characteristics of public lands when undertaking its multiple use land use planning and when making project-level decisions. In that regard, I am directing Deputy Secretary David Hayes to work with the BLM and interested parties to develop recommendations regarding the management of BLM lands with wilderness characteristics.

Based on my conversations with members of Congress, there is broad interest in managing our public lands in a sensible manner that takes into account such lands' wilderness qualities. There continues to be broad support for providing permanent protection for some of those lands under the Wilderness Act.

Given our shared interests in managing the public lands for the benefit of our communities and for future generations, the Department of the Interior will be soliciting input from members of Congress, state and local officials, tribes, and Federal land managers to identify BLM lands that may be appropriate candidates for Congressional protection under the Wilderness Act. I am directing the Deputy Secretary to work with the BLM to deliver a report to me and to the Congress regarding those areas.